

Former Rights Council Head Questioned Over Yukos

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Investigative Committee called the presidential human rights council's former head in for questioning this week, in what fellow activists link to an ongoing probe into experts who backed releasing jailed oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Russian media reported Thursday.

Ella Pamfilova, who headed the council from 2004 to 2010, confirmed to RIA Novosti on Thursday that she was called into the Investigative Committee on Tuesday, but gave no further details, citing a non-disclosure agreement.

"I don't see any reason for the Investigative Committee to call me in," Pamfilova said. "I hope this will be the first and the last time."

Ex-Yukos CEO Khodorkovsky was convicted in two related cases in 2005 and 2010 on economic charges, which have been criticized by human rights activists in Russia and abroad as politically motivated.

A campaign to liberalize laws covering economic crimes won Dmitry Medvedev's endorsement during his presidential term, but failed to deliver sweeping reforms. In 2011, the presidential human rights council published a report that called for Khodorkovsky's case to be reviewed.

In an interview with *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, human rights activist Valentin Gefter suggested that the Investigative Committee suspected the legal experts and rights activists who lobbied for law reforms and backed Khodorkovsky's release of being on the jailed tycoon's payroll.

"According to the Investigative Committee's logic, the passing of these laws allowed punishment for people initially involved in the Yukos case to be softened or dropped," Gefter was cited as saying.

At least two of the independent legal experts who worked on the report — former Constitutional Court judge Tatiana Morshchakova and leading Russian economist Sergei Guriev — have been formally questioned by the Investigative Committee. Guriev fled to France after questioning, saying he was afraid of being jailed.

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